

21 JUL 1975

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The Honorable John C. Stennis
Chairman, Committee on Armed Services
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Mr. Chairman:

On June 13 I gave you my views on the Soviet naval presence in the Indian Ocean, drawing on my previous testimony [redacted]

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[redacted] I am now able to repeat in this open correspondence what I said then, on the basis of information subsequently received [redacted]

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- Moscow's probable long-range strategic objectives in this area are to gain influence at the expense of the West and to limit the future role of China.
- Toward these goals, the Soviets use their naval presence as one element in a combined approach that utilizes political, economic, military aid and subversive activity.
- The naval force is a tangible reminder that the Soviet Union is a global power with interests in the area.
- The Soviets recognize the importance to the West of Persian Gulf oil, but the normal composition of their Indian Ocean force suggests that interdiction of Western commerce has not been a major objective.
- The level of Soviet naval activity in the area has grown slowly but steadily since 1968, and this pattern is expected to continue. The regular force usually consists of six surface combat units, a diesel-powered submarine, and about seven support ships. This routine presence is occasionally augmented by other units--for example, ships being transferred from the western fleets to the Pacific.

Increases in the US presence could result in a somewhat more rapid buildup in the Soviet forces. The Soviets have clearly shown a sensitivity to US activity, and this will be one of the factors in their determination of Indian Ocean requirements.

--I would emphasize, however, that I expect further growth in the level of Soviet activity even if there is no change in the US presence.

The most significant change in the situation over the past year has been the identification of a cruise missile facility at Berbera, Somalia. We now have firm evidence that Styx cruise missiles are in Somalia. The 25 mile-range Styx is used on the Osa and Komar guided missile patrol boats. While we have not yet detected these boats in Berbera, they may soon be delivered. The Soviets also are building an airfield at Berbera, and the availability of these facilities will enhance the capabilities of the forces deployed to the Indian Ocean.

--The investment the Soviets are making in Somalia clearly suggests that they intend to maintain a significant naval presence in the region.

The impact of Diego Garcia on Soviet naval activity would depend on the extent of our use of facilities there rather than simply on their existence. The Soviets probably would not be particularly bothered by the mere fact of a modest US base on Diego Garcia, for example, but would be inclined to accelerate the development of their Indian Ocean contingent if we maintained sizeable forces in the area.

Sincerely,

/s/ W. E. Colby

W. E. Colby
Director

LETTER TO: The Honorable John C. Stennis
Chairman, Committee on Armed Services
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

SUBJECT : Summary of Views on the Soviet Naval Presence
in the Indian Ocean

CONCUR:

Concurred in draft
Deputy Director for Intelligence

21 July 1975

Date

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